

# MAKING MOSAICS



Photos by Frank Varga / Skagit Valley Herald

(From left) Jasmine Mejia, 8, Blanca Orozco, 11, and Selena Orozco, 10, work on a mosaic Monday at the Kulshan Creek Neighborhood Station in Mount Vernon. The mosaic, depicting fresh fruits and vegetables, has yet to find a home, but will be hung somewhere in Mount Vernon in the coming weeks.

## *Children working with local artist to create colorful pieces*

By TAHLIA HONEA  
Staff Writer

**M**OUNT VERNON — Ten-year-old Selena Orozco picked out colorful pieces of glass Monday evening and carefully placed them on a half-finished mosaic at the Kulshan Creek Neighborhood Station.

If it weren't for the art project, she

said, she'd be laying down on her bed "just doing nothing."

Orozco lives in an apartment in the Kulshan Creek neighborhood and was participating in a public art project that will result in three approximately 3 feet tall and 5 feet long mosaics around the city.



A mosaic created by the children who live at Villa Santa Maria, a migrant housing complex on East College Way in Mount Vernon, welcomes visitors at the entrance.

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## Mosaics

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The first, completed by children in Villa Santa Maria migrant housing complex on College Way, is already hanging in an archway at the entrance of the buildings. Another, to be created later this summer by the children of La Casa De San Jose migrant community, will hang at the Mount Vernon High School. The location of the Kulshan children's mosaic — depicting fresh fruits and vegetables — is still being decided.

The project is being funded by the Office of National Drug Control Policy, which designated Skagit County a High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area in the late 90s.

The Catholic Housing Services, a non-profit organization offering affordable housing for migrant workers, was given a \$3,500 grant to complete the mosaics with children in the area, with the hopes of promoting a healthy active lifestyle — and simply having something fun to do.

Local artist Patty Detzer was chosen for the project and has been working with the children to create the colorful mosaics.

Detzer, who works as an artist in residence in the

Anacortes School District, said she's seen first-hand how art programs are being slashed for children.

"It's sad," she said.

"These are hard times."

Detzer wishes Mount Vernon could have more public art projects in its downtown to brighten the city and get citizens involved with beautifying their own space.

"It makes a big difference in how people feel to be surrounded by hand-made things," she said as she watched the children place the glass. "This is what I love. I love seeing people work together."

Carmen Martinez, who runs an after-school tutor program at the Kulshan Creek Neighborhood Station, said the station has been much more popular in the five weeks the children have been working on the mosaic there.

"I am more excited to come here and they are more excited," Martinez said through a translator.

Eight-year-old Jasmine Mejia said she likes working on the mosaic so much she thinks about it all the time — even during her summertime job picking berries.

"I like the color," she said. "I can't stop seeing it."

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